

April 22, 2004

HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the 6 million Jews who perished at the hands of the Nazis during the Holocaust. Today in the nation's Capitol, we gather to pay our respects with our Days of Remembrance ceremony. My district, the 9th Congressional District of Illinois, is home to a large number of survivors of the Nazi death camps, and this day holds deep meaning for those individuals and the entire Jewish community.

Recent events in the Middle East and around the world underscore the importance of this day. Anti-Semitic and anti-Israel rhetoric and demonstrations continue in numerous countries. And while we respect the right of every person to be heard, the hateful displays throughout the world that are directed at the Jewish people remind us that "Never Again" is not a guarantee, but a promise that we must uphold through education, dialogue, and determination. It reminds us that we must continue to strengthen the U.S. commitment to the security of Israel. Moreover, we must redouble our efforts to bring lasting peace to the Middle East.

"Never Again" also means that we must combat hate and genocide wherever it exists. We must never turn a blind eye to terror or discrimination. We must demand that our government hold those who carry out acts of needless brutality accountable and that it take action to prevent unwarranted human misery.

We recently marked the ten year anniversary of the Genocide in Rwanda, a horrific period in recent history. The world, including the United States, allowed for the brutal murder of 800,000 Tutsis in just 100 days of barbaric killings. President Clinton has cited the Rwandan genocide as one of his worst regrets.

In my Congressional district last weekend, the Cambodian Association of Illinois held a groundbreaking ceremony for the first Killing Fields Memorial Museum in the United States.

While we must honor those who were lost during the Holocaust and other past genocides by carrying on and living honorable and productive lives, the most important

thing we can do to honor lives lost in the past is to refuse to repeat the same mistakes today that allowed for those atrocities to occur in the past.[]

Today, as we mark the Holocaust and honor the lives that were lost in the world's worst murder case, and, as we reflect on other past genocides, history appears, shamefully, to be repeating itself.[] []

Today, in the Sudan, civilians are being systematically murdered, raped and brutalized by the government and other forces.[] We will likely witness the loss of hundreds of thousands of innocent lives in the coming weeks if the world stands idly by and does nothing to intervene.[] []

Some in this body may feel some comfort in pointing to the fact that a hearing has been held or that they were willing to sign a letter or cosponsor a non-binding resolution expressing concern.[] Those are important steps to take to put the Congress on record, but unfortunately, they will not save lives.[] The situation in Sudan is a human rights emergency, one that demands immediate action, not just words from the United States and the international community.[] "Never Again" means making tough decisions to preserve human life.[] []

While President Bush has acknowledged the situation in Sudan and has expressed concern, he has not taken action to address it.[] Phone calls and press statements do not constitute action.[] Today, I call on President Bush in the name of human dignity and compassion to honor those who were lost in years past while the world watched in silence, to exert true leadership and take action to stop the killing in the Sudan.[] []

Each one of us has a responsibility to condemn the senseless killing that is taking place and to demand that our great nation lead the world in bringing the bloodshed to an end.